March 15, - 2 m. - 1/7.75 De La Mare.

Woman's Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York.

Rose Leaves

BY ANNA DENNING.

THE HOME MISSION MONTHLY is an illustrated magazine published by the Woman's Board of Home Missions, and is indispensable to an intelligent comprehension of Woman's work for the evangelization of the H me land. Each number contains fresh letters from the front, abundant material on the topic of the month, and a department of Hints and Helps, which will be found very suggestive in conducting a society. It also contains a department for young people THE SUBSCRIPTION PRICE IS FIFTY CENTS PER YEAR. Address subscriptions to MISS S. F. LINCOLN, 156 Fifth Ave., New York City.

ROSE LEAVES

ANNA DENNING.

IT was a summer morning, and the sunlight fell in a stream of glory on a certain old-fashioned garden in Vermont.

It touched the eaves of the rambling, old brown house with gold, and sent long shafts of light from the narrow, many-paned windows.

It fell brightly on the mignonette bed, and the patches of marigold by the brick walk, and seemed to shine with an almost loving touch, on the bent figure of a woman, who stood drinking in, with all her soul, the glory of the morning.

The birds were singing in the tall elm trees; yellow butterflies were flitting in and out among the flowers, and there was the hum of bees about the wild rose bush by the door, which was bent almost to the ground with its weight of sweet, late roses.

"It's like a hymn o' praise," said the woman, as she touched with her hard, brown hand, a faded rose that fluttered in a pink shower to her feet.

Her face was worn and old and the thin gray hair was drawn back, with no attempt at adorn-

ment; but there were tender, gentle lines about the mouth, and a beautiful soul looked out from the faded brown eyes.

"'Pears like I can think better out here," she said, "among the Lord's birds and flowers; only thinkin' don't seem to do much good," she added, and a shadow fell on the worn face.

Deacon Miller was considered one of the "best fixed" men in Milton, as the homely phrase expressed it. In his early married life he had had a hard struggle to keep the farm going, and the little children, which came to them rapidly, clothed and shod. The farm was mortgaged, and it had taken years of hard work to clear it and lay by the snug fortune that was now his.

One by one the children had been taken, until only one son had been left to grow to manhood. In her heart the mother had given this boy to Home Missionary work. Many nights, after the household slept, she lay awake, dreaming happy dreams of the future for her son. He was a noble, manly lad, and already knew of his mother's hope for him.

Then came the shock which had made the mother older in a few days than had all her years of work.

John was returning from a picnic, there was a railroad accident, and suddenly, without warning he was taken, and the desolate father and mother were left without a child to comfort their old age.

The loss of the other children, while it had

seemed to sweeten and expand the mother's nature, had only served to make the father grow more silent and hard with the years. For the wife who longed for his sympathy, he had no word of comfort, and she had long since ceased to expect it. He grew more and more close in money matters, and while he was strictly honest to his fellow men, to the Lord he gave as little as he possibly could.

It was the time for the annual offering for Home Missions. The good minister had spoken with much earnestness and feeling of the great need of the home missionaries; of the debt of the Board which made it impossible for it to give the help so greatly needed, and of the call for individual offerings.

Mrs. Miller's heart was full, as she thought of the boy who was to have been her offering to the Lord for this work, and of her empty pocketbook.

The Deacon listened with no show of feeling in his face. When the plate was passed he gave a silver quarter, and looked as if his whole duty had been done. The gentle face by his side flushed with shame, but he was looking at the choir, and took no notice.

Mr. Thompson, across the aisle, saw the Deacon's quarter, and dropping the two silver dollars back into his pocket substituted a fifty-cent piece in their place.

"If Deacon Miller don't give but twenty-five

cents, rich as *he* is, and not a chick nor a child—why, fifty cents is plenty for *me*," he thought.

Old Mrs. Hill saw Mr. Thompson's fifty cents, and put in a mate to it, although she had intended, while listening to the sermon, to give a dollar.

And so on down the church the effect of Deacon Miller's twenty-five cents was felt, and in spite of the extra need, and in spite of the good minister's sermon, the collection was smaller than usual.

Mrs. Miller had spoken of the sermon on the way home, and timidly suggested that she did not need a winter dress, and would like to give the cost to missions; but her only comfort was to hear the oft-repeated remark, "Charity begins at *hum*, Eliza."

"I aint got no patience with that Board! What right had they to spend money *before* they had it? Dont look honest, no way yer can fix it."

"The minister explained all that," timidly ventured the wife.

"Wall," said the Deacon, "I give a hundred dollars when the church was built, and I don't feel called on to give all I can git to pay ministers in other places."

When that hundred dollars was mentioned his wife grew silent at once, she knew it was useless to talk further. She had heard of that hundred dollars for the last ten years, and had often wished that the Deacon had never given it. This was as far as she let herself go, in fault-finding.

She had loved him truly when they were married, and she thought with more sorrow than censure, of this grasping, elderly man, who was so different from the lover of her youth.

It was Monday morning, and she stood in the sunlight trying to think how she could get this desire of her heart—a few dollars, all her own, for Home Missions.

The problem was still unsolved, as she turned to the porch, presently, with the shadow still on her face.

"I am willing," she said; "if the Lord wants me to give He will surely show me the way."

She paused on the porch, and took up a paper of rose leaves which had been put to dry for the linen closet. Going into the house she stopped at the table in the wide, sunny sitting-room, and took up a larger paper upon which to empty the leaves. As she unfolded it the heading of a paragraph caught her attention. "Rose Leaves!" "Wall, that's curus," she said, and so read the article through, once, twice, and even the third time, while the shadow lifted from her face.

The article was not long, but every line was full of hope to the woman who read it.

The growing craze for rose jars, rose bowls, and even rose bags, was spoken of, then the need for rose leaves that this craze necessitated; finally the article ended with a liberal offer for rose leaves in ounce packages, prepared in the old-fashioned spiced way in which our grandmothers

used to prepare them for their clothespresses. The address of a druggist in New York was given.

Mrs. Miller stood by the table silent and thoughtful, and the tears were in her eyes as she thought of how quickly her prayer had been answered.

"The old-fashioned spiced way!" she knew it by heart, for had not her mother taught her just how to dry the leaves and steep the spices?

She had been saving the leaves from the rose bushes—of which there were a goodly number in the yard—to put away with the linen, and the old sweetbrier by the door was still full of buds.

To you who have money to spend as you may desire, this may seem like an overdrawn picture; but can you imagine how it would seem to have absolutely nothing to spend as you choose?

When this wife wanted the necessities of her plain wardrobe, she was expected to find the cost, and then just that much money was given her, not grudgingly, but with no show of interest.

The Deacon was not a mean man—at least he did not know it; but his nature was narrow, and love for his money had seemed to take the place of love for his little children who had gone out, one by one, from his home. To the wife's repressed nature, her son had been the one joy of her silent life, and after he was taken there was left the desire to do a little of what she had hoped might be his work; but she had no opportunity.

And so this work with the rose leaves seemed

to come as a gift from heaven. She did not want her husband to know of her plan, and so she only worked with the leaves when he was busy in the meadow-lot farthest from the house.

"I'll tell him when I get the money ready to send," she thought.

At the end of two weeks, she had prepared and sent away twenty ounces, and had twenty more all ready to tie up, which was the last of the crop.

She had brought down to the sitting-room a tiny covered jar, which had belonged to her mother, and filled it with rose leaves, and this served for a rose jar on the wide mantle, and sent its spicy odor all through the broad room. Hidden away among the leaves was a crisp two dollar bill, the money, so far, for her roses. Did ever money look so beautiful before?

And then the busy hurrying feet were stopped, and the tired hands had plenty of time for rest.

She had gone down to the spring-house for a crock of milk, and as she hurried up the stone steps, her foot slipped—those steady quick feet that were so little given to faltering—and she fell backwards, down the steps and could not rise, and then, mercifully, knew no more.

Here the Deacon, coming home in a great hurry for dinner, found her, white and motionless. He carried her to the house, to their snowy bed in the sitting-room, and sent the hired man for the village doctor.

Was she dead? this part of himself, who had grown into his life, till he could not even think how the world would seem without her!

Then two of his wife's friends and the doctor came, who got the limp form into bed; but it was an hour before the doctor came out on the sunny porch, where the Deacon stood by the rose bush.

"She will live," he said, "take heart; but I must tell you, Deacon, that I fear she will not walk again. The spine is injured, and I have but little hope; you may go in for a few minutes now; she is partially conscious and may know you. She must have the best nursing, and be kept absolutely quiet."

The Deacon went into the room, and stood by the bedside; she looked with tired, gentle eyes into his face, but she did not know him.

"The money," she said, "is in the jar on the mantle, among the rose leaves; and when the other packages are sent, there will be two more: Four dollars! That's a good deal of money, and I made it all myself. I'll tell the Deacon, soon, now. It's John's offering for Home Missions this year. The Deacon is a good man—a kind husband—but he don't understand."

And then she turned away, and the Deacon sank on his knees by the bed, and wept.

That night the two friends watched, and the husband, unconscious of fatigue, sat outside the door, and waited for the morning.

He could hear her, at intervals, talking of the

rose leaves, and soon he gathered the whole pitiful little story. Then she talked of John, of his future, and once he heard her praying that *he* might become more charitable, and then she was a young mother again and prattled to her babies.

The man outside the door missed no sound of her voice, but sat while the tears ran down his furrowed cheeks, and beheld his own narrow life in contrast with this sweet and noble nature, and could find no word for his sorrow but only whispered over and over, "Lord have mercy! have mercy!"

When day dawned, he rose and went out by the rose bush. The dew was on the grass and flowers, and a soft pink bud—the last of the season—had burst into bloom with the dawn.

He picked it with awkward fingers, and going softly in where the sufferer at last slept, exhausted, he put it between her fingers; then waited for her waking. When her eyes opened at length, she looked with questioning recognition at her husband. He bent tenderly over her.

"You are hurt," he said, "but will be better now." Then she saw the rose, and her face lit up with pleasure. "How came it here?" she whispered.

"I brought it to you, dear," he answered softly, and stooping, he kissed her faded cheek. A light of joy shone in her eyes as she raised them, with tears, to his face.

And so the Home Missionary money was raised,

and in due time sent, with a generous donation from the Deacon.

"Aunt Eliza," as all the young people in the village call Mrs. Miller, has never walked since that summer morning, but each year she sends away her rose leaves, and gets the money for Home Missions, and now the Deacon's offering always accompanies hers.

Through the long, bright summer days, she sits by the window, where she can see the rose bush beckon and sway in the wind, sending to her its fragrance with every movement.

She watches it with contented, happy eyes, for deep in her heart is the thought that the fragrance of the rose leaves goes with the offering she sends, and is wafted to the workers in the Home land, among the Indians, the Mormons, the Mexicans, to the sunny South, or wherever the money is sent.

And who can say that this may not be true?

For as the Lord loveth a cheerful giver, may He not also, more abundantly bless a joyful giver, who looks on all that she has, as not her own, but only as held in trust for Him?

One cent each; 75c. per hundred.

No 80.—3d Ed.—3, 1898.